

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #0812/01 0991022
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 081022Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6211
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 3661
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0300
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 3917
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4462
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3672
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1929
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 4420
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1293
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1739
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 8287
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 5768
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0673
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4797
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6746
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 9483
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000812

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that PM Ehud Olmert and PA President Mahmoud Abbas have decided to meet every two weeks until the November 4

deadline for striking a deal, regardless of developments on the ground. The Jerusalem Post reported that officials on both sides said that as in the past, the meeting yesterday deteriorated into mutual accusations.

All media quoted National Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer as saying on Monday: "An Iranian attack will prompt a severe reaction from Israel, which will destroy the Iranian nation." He added that Tehran "is definitely aware of our strength. Even so, they are teasing us with their alliances with Syria and Hizbullah, and supplying them with many weapons, and we have to deal with that." Media quoted Defense Minister Ehud Barak as saying that Israelis not interested in an escalation with its neighbors.

The Jerusalem Post, Ha'aretz, and Yediot reported that jailed Fatah/Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti called for a comprehensive cease-fire and affirmed his support for a two-state solution in a message he sent to Israelis on the eve of Peace Now's 30th anniversary event in Tel Aviv, being held Tuesday. In his letter, Barghouti wrote: "I am ready, as is an overwhelming majority of the Palestinian nation, for an historic [reconciliation]."

Ha'aretz reported that the party of billionaire businessman Arkady Gaidamak, Social Justice, is expected to join forces in the next few weeks with three members of the Pensioners Party to form a Social Justice faction in the Knesset. According to the agreement, Social Justice will become a Knesset-represented party on April 18. This is the first step of Gaidamak's much-bigger plan to add MKs from various parties to form a faction of 18 MKs by the next Knesset elections. The new faction will be eligible to have one of its members appointed a minister -- perhaps Gaidamak himself -- according to the current arrangement. Gaidamak, who plans to run

for mayor of Jerusalem, has said he would consider serving as minister for Jerusalem affairs.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that on Monday Israeli police closed the Jerusalem studio and transmitter of RAM-FM, an English-language West Bank radio station that plays Western music and tries to bring Israelis and Palestinians together through the broadcasts. The Israeli Communications Ministry claimed that the station was broadcasting without a permit, interfered with airwaves, and endangered airport signals. The radio station has said that its broadcasts will continue as normal from Ramallah and that it has been operating within the parameters of the law.

Leading media reported that on Monday, as part of the nationwide emergency drill, the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet went through an exercise involving a chemical attack on Israel's home front.

Israel Radio reported that in the past few weeks the IDF collected hundreds of military-issue weapons from settlers in the Binyamin area (north of Jerusalem), including from reservist officers. Only the members of the settlement's security squads and those responsible for security were allowed to continue to hold army weapons. Settler representatives told Israel Radio that the weapons collection endangers those traveling on roads in the territories, especially now that roadblocks have been removed and weapons have been transferred to the PA.

Maariv reported that the spokeswoman of Howard L. Berman (D-CA), the Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee, told the newspaper yesterday that Congress does not intend to hold hearings to examine on Israel's air strike on Syria last September.

Ha'aretz quoted Vice PM Haim Ramon as saying during a session of the Knesset's State Control Committee two months ago that all 450 homes in Ofra, the "mother of settlements" in Samaria [the northern West Bank], were built on privately owned Palestinian land. This is the first time such a senior government source has admitted in an official forum that the first settlement in Samaria was built on private Palestinian land.

In a conference call from Israel to U.S. reporters and reported by Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post, televangelist John Hagee, the founder of Christians United for Israel (CUFI), said that he was not trying to dictate Israel's security and political policies and that

he will support Israel whether or not it carries out settlement withdrawals, adding that this is something its citizens will decide. The Jerusalem Post quoted Hagee as saying that to the extent that CUFJ has taken "concrete action," it has been "limited to asking the White House not to pressure Israel into making territorial concessions that she does not wish to make." Hagee was replying to criticism by Reform Rabbi Eric Yoffie.

All three major Hebrew-language newspapers led with interviews of former chief justice Aharon Barak, who told Ha'aretz and Maariv that Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann's reforms will make Israel a third-world country. Aharon Barak and other critics of Friedmann disparage Friedmann's perceived intention of subordinating judges and court presidents, administratively and institutionally, to politicians. Friedmann's plan to restrict the right to appear before the High Court of Justice has also been censured. In late March senior police officers lashed out publicly against the initiative of Friedmann and Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter to shorten the statute of limitations in cases of fraud and breach of faith. They cited possible damage to the ability of the law enforcement system to deal with this phenomenon and to create deterrence. In March 2008 Akiva Eldar of Ha'aretz criticized Friedmann's justification of the police's attitude during the 2000 riots in the Israeli-Arab sector. Media quoted Friedmann as saying yesterday that freedom of speech was considered sacred in Israel as long as it did not refer to the Supreme Court's functioning.

All media reported that for the first time in Israeli history a former president of the state -- Moshe Katsav -- will sit in court today as a defendant in a sex offenses case. The media quoted Katsav's counsels as saying that he will not enter a guilty plea if the court does not read the writ of indictment today. On Monday the High Court of Justice did not grant such a delay.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the U.S. Congress has started commemorating Israel's 60th anniversary. The effort, started on April 3, will extend beyond Israel's Independence Day on May 14 and through June.

Leading media reported that Kadima has doubled its membership to 50,000 after a long recruiting slump.

Israel Radio discussed the possible implications of Senator John McCain choosing Condoleezza Rice as his running mate.

Yediot reported that Gilad Sharon, the former PM's son, will publish memoirs that will include anecdotes about President Bush and Tony Blair.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "A government doesn't drill itself. A government acts in keeping with diplomatic and political considerations. So its involvement in this exercise seems pretty ridiculous."

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The Israeli paradox is that a majority of Israelis adopted Peace Now's positions, but still love to hate Peace Now."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Peace Now helps remind us that Jewish civilization attaches the highest value to peace. Yet by ... holding to positions that experience has shown risk rendering Israel indefensible ... the organization places itself on the periphery of Israel's body politic."

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz: "The continued presence of Jews on territory which [the Palestinians] will have sovereignty in the future, and the assurance of their safety, must be part of a durable peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians."

Block Quotes:

I. "A Heap of Eyes for an Eye"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/8): "It was only last week that the Defense Minister, touring the North declared Israel the strongest country in the region and said he wouldn't advise anyone to start up with us.... A government doesn't drill itself. A government acts in keeping with diplomatic and political considerations. So its involvement in this exercise seems pretty ridiculous.... In wartime, the army has always been careful not to venture into the political minefield. But in an exercise where everything is make-believe, the IDF is liable to fall into the potholes and booby traps of internal politics. How happy can the army be with the public relations stunt cooked up President Georg W. Bush and Ehud Olmert to reveal Israel's role in destroying the Syrian nuclear installation? Are we safer after this revelation, which is humiliating to Syria, than we were before it?.... What Israel needs to prepare for is not bracing itself under fire but deterrence. It needs to do what Ariel Sharon promised to do and didn't, and what Ehud Barak threatened to do, and hasn't done yet: To make it clear that when missiles are fired at our home front, Israel's response will be much more than an eye for an eye. A heap of eyes for an eye is more like it."

II. "A Sad Victory for the Left"

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/8): "The Israeli paradox is that a majority of Israelis adopted Peace Now's positions, but still love to hate Peace Now -- because Peace Now is a bunch of 'Arab lovers'.... But the failure has been as equally great as the success was. Because the impression is that we are moving away from that result. First of all, with the passage of time, Peace Now has become the most maligned movement even among the Left. A significant part of that left wing moved further to the Left.... Second, the settlement enterprise. The settlers are the ones who establish facts on the ground. It makes no difference that a majority of Israelis are opposed to settlements in the midst of heavily populated Arab areas. The important thing is that the settlers succeed in dragging Israel onto every hilltop. They create a bi-national reality. They undermine the chance for peace. Perhaps even destroy it.... And third, the Islamist wave. That tsunami destroys everything. It destroyed Afghanistan and Algeria and it has turned Iran into one of the most benighted countries in the world. It has caused the Arab and Muslim world to be the most backward in the world. It has produced the oppression of women, and mass waves of death, from Sudan to Afghanistan, and Iraq to Algeria. This wave has come here in the form of Hamas. And until that wave is quelled, mainly by means of Muslim counter-forces, Peace Now is going to continue to be a movement of daydreamers. "

III. "Peace Now at 30"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/8): "This month marks Peace Now's 30th anniversary.... Over the years, many but not all of Peace Now's positions have been mainstreamed. Israel is indeed negotiating with the PLO. Most Israelis are reconciled to a Palestinian state, though only in the context of a deal that guarantees them real security. And most accept -- unenthusiastically -- that Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] would have to be uprooted were the Palestinians prepared for peace. But they are not.... While claiming it does not want to push Israel back to the indefensible 1949 Armistice Lines, Peace Now nonetheless opposes any construction over the Green Line.... Peace Now also stands squarely outside the consensus by favoring 'joint sovereignty' over Jerusalem's Old City. And while it opposes the 'implementation' of the Palestinian 'right of return,' it does not necessarily oppose its affirmation.... Peace Now helps remind us that Jewish civilization attaches the highest value to peace. Yet by remaining ideologically stagnant, holding to positions that experience has shown risk rendering Israel indefensible, and keeping its decision-making methods and funding sources mystifying, the organization places itself on the periphery of Israel's body politic."

IV. "Judenrein Palestine"

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz (4/8): "It is generally agreed that Israel should not incorporate all of Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank], with its large Arab population, within its borders. But does it necessarily follow that all areas not incorporated within Israel's borders need to be cleared of all Jews? The Palestinian negotiators currently engaged in the phantom negotiations with Israel's Foreign Minister are in any case not capable of making and carrying out any commitments. But when and if serious Palestinian negotiators appear, it will have to be made clear to them that the continued presence of Jews on territory which they will have sovereignty in the future, and the assurance of their safety, must be part of a durable peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. An agreement that does not include such a provision will not be an agreement worthy of being called a peace agreement."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Former IDF spokesman Nachman Shai wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: "There is a lot of oil and fuel in the Middle East, there is a smell of oil fumes in the air, and statements [by Israeli cabinet ministers] are liable to be the match that lights them."

Block Quotes:

"Statements Can Also Light a Fire"

Former IDF spokesman Nachman Shai wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (4/8): "Israel must act with extreme caution on the Iranian matter.... A balance of terror is developing between Israel and Iran: the Iranians fear Israel's capabilities and claim that this is the reason they are developing parallel abilities to Israel's, which promised in the past that it would not be the first country to use nuclear weapons in the Middle East. There is definitely cause for concern. Iran ignores international public opinion, continues on its path and within a few years, if it is not stopped, it will have nuclear capability. But that is not the only threat. The fact that semi-military organizations, such as Hizbullah in the north and Hamas in the south, have impressive rocket fire ability, is a second strategic threat. At any given moment Iran is capable of ordering them to put these capabilities into use and then the Israeli home front will be a convenient and soft target. There is a lot of oil and fuel in the Middle East, there is a smell of oil fumes in the air, and statements [by Israeli cabinet ministers] are liable to be the match that lights them."

JONES